

ARCHIBALD MENZIES AND THE FISHES OF KING GEORGE'S SOUND

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Through the kindness of my late friend Major H. M. Whittell, O.B.E., I have been able to peruse a typescript copy of the "Journal of Archibald Menzies, Botanist with George Vancouver at King George's Sound, September 27, 1791 to October 13, 1791" (British Museum Addl. Ms. 32641). The folios of the original are nos. 41 to 73. The general observations on fish and fishing by Menzies are as follows; he also named some new species which claim attention here.

1791—

Sep. 29

folio 43—

"We first landed on the west side where we found the fishing party employed in hauling the Seine with little or no success."

folio 50—

"We saw some rude fish wares which did not bespeak much ingenuity in the contrivers.—They consisted of a row of small boughs of Trees stuck close together in the sand about two or three feet & kept close at the top by cross stieks along both sides fastened together with small withies & along their bottom some stones sand & gravel was raised up behind to prevent the fish escaping."

folio 53—

"We left looking glasses beads fish-hooks & other trinkets in some of the best huts . . ."

Oct. 4

[In Oyster Harbour a large party of officers and men went to haul the Seine on 4 Oct. 1791] . . .

"but their Seines were torn up & renderd so useless with the stumps of old trees that they had little or no success in fishing."

folio 60—

"The Seine was hauled in every situation about the sound where it was likely to procure most fish, but those on board were frequently more successful with their hooks and lines . . ."

folio 61—

". . . we examined with the greatest care round their huts and fire places & could find no vestiges of the bones of birds animals or fish, no Shells or any remnant whatever that might enable us to form a criterion of their means of subsistence."

folio 65—

"Fish we have already observed were not very plenty & we in some measure ascribd this scarcity to the number of large

Sharks which frequented the Sound. Among those taken in the Seine or with Hook & line were the Sur mullet—the common Mackrel—*Balistes sinensis*—*Balistes forcipatus*. Two species of the genus *Gasterosteus* & several species of Bream of which I had opportunity to describe only the two following

SPARUS

guttatus S. caerulesecente fuscus, corpore ocellis flavicantibus

cauda integra.

9 3

B.5. D.—. P. 12. V.1,6. A.—. C. 14.

11 10

This fish is thick & strong & about 13 inches in length;

folio 66—

its general color is brown imbued with azure, markd all over the body with numerous pale yellow spots especially on the back & sides, but they become fainter on the belly which is whitish: these spots do not extend on the head or fins which are nearly the general color of the body, except that the dorsal & anal fins together with the tail are tipt with dirty yellow. The head is punctuated with minute dots. Eyes are large—sides brown tingd with blue with the inner edge red. The two foremost teeth in each jaw are large & projecting, the rest are regularly placed & gradually diminish in size towards the back part of each jaw. The body is coverd with large scales. The lateral line is but faintly markd, it is placed pretty high & runs parallel with the back till it comes opposite the end of the dorsal fin where it bends downward & from thence goes streight to the tail.

folio 66—

“The dorsal fin consists of 21 rays the first nine are spiny & the rest soft.

The anal fin has 13 rays, the first three are spiny, the rest soft. The pectoral fin is somewhat rounded & large consisting of 12 rays.

SPARUS

ornatus S. rubescente fuscus, capite pinnis dorsalibus analibusque vittis caeruleis, corpore ocellis caeruleis, cauda integra.

B. 5. D. 22. P. 14. V. 5. A. 15. C. 14.

folio 67—

“The subject of this description is about a foot long & beautifully ornamented with blue streaks about the head & on the dorsal & anal fins but blue spotted on the body—the general color on the upper part of the head & behind the eyes is of a darker brown than the rest of the body—the irides are reddish—the back dorsal fin anal fin & tail are of a reddish-brown—the two foremost teeth in each jaw are large & projecting, those in the upper jaw are separated so as to admit the other

two between them when in contact—the other teeth are placed in a regular row & gradually decrease in size as they approach the back part of each jaw.

The anal & dorsal fins consist of soft simple rays, but those of the tail are dichotomously branched.

The lateral line is placed near & runs parallel to the back, till it approaches near the tail, where it bends down to the middle of the body & then runs straight to the tail."

On the 12th October, 1791, Menzies was in his friend, Lt. Broughton's little boat to collect a petrel, and, he says,

folio 72—

"whilst I was absent from the Discovery they caught a large Shark, which I regretted much in not being on board to examine it more particularly as it had 42 young ones alive in its belly—which on being set at liberty were able to swim about with agility, each of them were about 14 inches long & proves that this which appeared to be the *Squalus glaucus* is very prolific. As I knew this species to be viviparous I was anxious on this occasion to learn whether these young were in utero, or whether to slun some danger they had swam down the fishes throat to take shelter in its Maw as some authors relate of it."

NOTES ON MENZIES' SPECIES.

The Surmullet would be *Upeneichthys porosus* (Cuv. & Val., 1829), and the Mackerel, *Pneumatophorus australasicus* (Cuv. & Val., 1832).

As for Menzies' Latin names, the ones then new have no standing nowadays and are only quoted for their historic interest; they may be disposed of as follows:

1. *Balistes sinensis*. Originally *Balistes chinensis* Osbeck, 1765 = *sincnsis* Forster, 1771.

The fish identified as this species by Menzies was perhaps *Monacanthus geographicus* Cuvier, 1817, or some other common W. Australian Leatherjacket.

2. *Balistes foreipatus*.—A name given by Gmelin, 1789, to an American file-fish illustrated by Willughby. Menzies' fish was more likely another leatherjacket, of which there are several species in King George's Sound. Family Aluteridae.
3. *Gasterosteus* spp. Unrecognisable now. Perhaps Scorpaenidae.
4. *Sparus guttatus* Menzies. This name has not apparently been used before. It evidently applies to the Spotted Parrot Fish, *Pseudolabrus punctulatus* (Gunther, 1862).
5. *Sparus ornatus*. Menzies' name is now preoccupied by Sevastianov (Nova Aeta Ae. Sci. Petrop. xiv, 1805, 521). His King George's Sound fish was a Maori or Rainbow Fish, *Ophthalmolepis lineolatus* (Cuv. & Val., 1838).